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Long Live the Republic

Lady Senator Lavina Wren's Address to an Audience on Cularin

By Morrie Mullins

Former Living Force Plot Director and Campaign Designer

The business of being a Senator in the Republic -- never a simple task -- became much more complicated when the direction of debates on the Senate floor made it clear that discontent with the Republic was growing. With the vote of no confidence in Supreme Chancellor Valorum and the inability of the Senate to adequately censure the Trade Federation, one of the worst jobs in the galaxy was that of a junior Senator. The worst of all was that of a junior Senator without a system.

Following the disappearance of Cularin, Senator Wren remained in the Senate as much out of pity as out of respect. While she was well regarded, she was also young (at least in matters political) and knew that she had much to prove. Hers became a strong voice among what would come to be known as the Loyalists, those who believed in the Republic and its ideals, and in spite of her lack of a constituency, she argued with such passion that many among the Senators forgot that she was representing a system that, for a time, included only herself and a few thousand expatriates. At least, those who agreed with her forgot.

The battle to continue to represent Cularin was only one that Wren managed to win because of the continued commitment of the Jedi to discovering what had happened in Cularin, and their belief that Cularin was not, in fact, lost. The disturbance in the Force was not what you would expect if ten million people had died; if anything, they said, the disturbance was more akin to ten million people suddenly going into hyperspace, but not emerging. Even with the support of the Jedi, though, it's unlikely that Wren would have maintained her position in the Senate for more than another six months after Cularin's re-emergence, had nothing happened.

She has returned to Cularin a number of times since its recovery, but until now has only made "unofficial" visits. This is a transcript and account of her first "official" visit to Cularin since its return, and provides a number of insights into the Lady Senator's thoughts on the current galactic situation. The speech was delivered with Senator Wren standing atop a platform beside the statue of Reidi Artom in Gadrin's main square. The outfit Wren wears is a spacer's outfit, very similar to the one Artom wears in the statue.

Friends, it makes me glad to return to Cularin. No matter how many years I live on Coruscant, or on the lanes that run between the worlds, this will always be home to me. It fills my heart with joy to see so many of you here to

welcome me back, even if my visit will ultimately be far too short.

It is a trying time for the Republic. There is no point in trying to make the situation other than what it is. We are at war, and the worst of it is, we are at war with ourselves. Cularin, for better or worse, has been left out of the battles; with no standing army to speak of, the Senate had nothing to conscript, even had we been present when the war began. Our militia will suffice for what defense we need, beyond what our friends from Thaere provide.

We here in Cularin fly in a small ship. I've seen the effects myself, on Coruscant, a world of big ships and bigger ideas. I've done my best to pilot our small ship through the traffic of the big world without bringing us to harm, and any of you who've tried such a feat know that being a small ship is both good and bad. It is easy, sometimes, to escape the notice of the big ships. It is easy to slide into slips where larger ships cannot dock, to be subtle where larger ships can only barrel straight ahead and hope everything that needs to can get out of the way. There are advantages to being small.

But there are also challenges. The small ship that is Cularin must be piloted with great care, to ensure that the larger ships remain aware of us. There are those who could run Cularin over, who could fire up their engines with us too nearby and burn us out of existence without ever knowing they'd touched our lives. The subtlety, the ability to remain unnoticed, is both the best and the worst part of piloting a ship as small as ours.

I do not claim to have been the best of pilots, but I have worked hard these past few years to do what I can to ensure that our ship is noticed when it needs to be, and not noticed when that would be for the best.

I had worried, for a time, that Cularin might become a military target for the Separatists - - or, if not Cularin proper, then, at the very least, Almas. I will paraphrase what Master Windu has said: The Jedi are protectors, not soldiers. And yet, these protectors - - led by Master Yoda, Master Windu, and others - - form the very heart of so much that seeks to defend the Republic from the divisive tactics of the Separatists. A strike at Coruscant would be sheer folly, but a strike at Almas, one of the largest facilities to train Jedi in the galaxy, would threaten the lives of Jedi and civilian alike.

Not that I have any doubt of the ability of the Jedi to defend themselves. Master Lanius Qel-Bertuk is one of the wisest, most capable beings I have ever had the pleasure to meet. But if the armies of the Separatists were loosed upon Almas, how long could any group, no matter how powerful, hold out? One lesson of the battle of Geonosis is that Jedi are mortal, just like the rest of us. A thousand myths, and many more living beings, died that day. Jedi are mortal, as are we all, and if the mortal Jedi may be targets, then we must ensure that we are all protected.

This is why we continue to enlist the assistance of the Navy of Thaere to protect Cularin's borders. The Separatist armies could strike anywhere, at any time. The annoyance that is our comet cloud and the various geospatial anomalies that keep hyperspace travel from working properly into or out of Cularin are also our best defense. With a strong force to patrol our borders, it becomes much less likely that the Separatists will attempt to upset the balance of life for any of us - Jedi or not.

[At this point, there is a ruckus in the back of the audience. The cameras pan in that direction and we see a squad of twenty or more Thaereian military personnel surrounding a group of three Humans. Binders are waved around, and the three Humans are subdued and dragged away, shouting "Down with the Supreme Chancellor!" When the camera pans back to Wren, she looks somewhat paler than before, but the color returns as she forces a smile and begins to speak again.]

It appears that we have three fewer Separatists in the system, thanks to the Thaereian Navy. We should be... grateful that they are here and helping us to keep peace. If there seem to be more of them than before in the system, that is because the war has escalated across the galaxy, and we, like everyone else, need protection. The Senate was kind enough to appoint Thaere as Cularin's protector some time ago, and that we have a protector is something for which we should be thankful. It may be that the vessel in which we find ourselves is not the vessel we might have chosen, but it's easier to fly to Coruscant in a ship we find unpleasant than it is to walk.

Where do we go, then? What do we do? What is going to happen to the galaxy? My friends, I wish I could tell you. I do. What I know is this: The thing that matters most, to all of us, is the preservation of our way of life. The Republic is strong. The Republic is kind and generous. The Republic works. It is in all of our best interests to keep the Republic intact, and so long as I remain Senator for Cularin, I will stand with the Loyalists. Our armies, commanded by the wise Jedi, are smart and quick and will defeat the droid armies of the Separatists.

We cannot allow the Republic to fragment. We cannot stand by and watch something that has endured for a thousand generations vanish because a handful of over-proud fools believe they can do it "better." The lessons we have learned, the things we have seen, the victories we have won as part of the Republic - - all of that is what stands to be lost. All of that is what we give up, if the Separatists succeed in tearing our beloved Republic apart.

So I say this to you: As I stand here before you today, I serve the Republic. I am loyal to the Republic, to the Senate, and to Supreme Chancellor Palpatine. I will fight to preserve that which you have set me to represent, not only because I believe it is right, but because it is the mandate that I have received from you. Find ways to support the Republic. Do what you can. But take care. We still fly a small ship, and the galaxy is larger than any of us have imagined.

Long live the Republic!